

Governors Island, New York Arsenal
Storehouse and Commanding Officer's Quarters
(Building #135)
Governors Island
New York Harbor
New York City
New York County
New York

HABS No. NY-5715-6A

HABS
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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

GOVERNORS ISLAND, NEW YORK ARSENAL HABS No. NY-5715-6A
STOREHOUSE AND COMMANDING OFFICER'S QUARTERS (Building #135)

Location: The building is located east of Andes Road and Buildings #107 and #108, Governors Island, New York Harbor, New York, New York County, New York.

Present Owner: United States Coast Guard

Present Occupant: Commander and Mrs. J. Fenner
Mr. and Mrs. Naus
United States Coast Guard

Present Use: Offices and officers quarters

Significance: Building #135 is composed of two buildings, a storehouse and an officer's quarters. The storehouse is the remaining one of two original storehouses that were the first buildings constructed at the New York Arsenal. The officer's quarters is also the remaining one of two quarters that were built after the two storehouses. The storehouse and the quarters, now combined into one building, were the original core of the New York Arsenal. The officers quarters portion of the structure has well preserved interiors. The original storehouse portion of the building has been so modified that its historic character is minimal.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: The present building is composed of two buildings: the south end was one of two ordnance storehouses built at the New York Arsenal circa 1835 after appropriations made by Congress in 1833. The north end, originally a separate building, was built in 1839. Both buildings appear on a map of the arsenal prepared by the Corps of Engineers in 1839.

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2. Architect: The architect is unknown, but may have been the Corps of Engineers who were doing construction work on Governors Island in the 1830s. Interior details of the quarters bear close resemblance to models shown in Asher Benjamin's, The Practical House Carpenter, and portions of the design were likely taken from this or other contemporary architectural handbooks.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The War Department of the United States (called the Department of the Army after 1947) owned the building until 1966 when the island was transferred to the United States Coast Guard.
4. Builder: Work on the buildings was carried out Captain J.L. Smith, Corps of Engineers, under the direction of the Chief of Ordnance. Captain Smith was in charge of construction on Governors Island during the 1830s.
5. Original plans and construction: The ordnance storehouse was a rectangular building and the officers quarters were square in plan as shown on the map of 1839. A proposed expansion plan drawn in 1847 shows clearly the position and relationship between the two buildings. The cost of the ordnance storehouse building was estimated as \$5,825.58 and the cost of the officers quarters as \$10,336.12 in a 1908 history of the New York Arsenal.

Plans for the officer's quarters published in 1876 show the basement, first and second floors. In the basement were two kitchens, a laundry, cellar and store room. The first floor was a central hall plan with a parlor and library, dining room and sitting room. Most of the 1852 addition was a coal cellar. On the second floor were located five bedrooms, two rooms for servants and a bathroom. (See HABS No. NY-5715-6A data pages 11-13).

6. Additions and alterations: In 1852, the quarters of the Commanding Officer were expanded along the south side of the structure through a two-story addition which almost doubled the overall size of the structure. The outside wall of this new addition abutted the ordnance storehouse located to the south.

The first indication that there was a verandah attached to the residence is from a map dated 1879 which shows a porch along the east and north facades and another porch along the west facade, the rear of the building.

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In 1884, a one-story brick addition was constructed to the rear of the residence.

In 1935, plans were approved to enclose the two-story porch along the west side of the original residence and to construct a two-story, two-bay brick addition to the rear of the 1852 addition. At this time, an external brick stairway was constructed to a second story entrance in this new addition.

At the same time, the interior spaces were remodeled to allow the structure to be used for two families instead of one. Army plans drawn in the 1950s show that the first floor incorporated space in the 1852 addition for a kitchen, laundry and bedroom. On the second floor, the original bedrooms were converted into living room, dining room and kitchen spaces. Space for an extra bedroom was incorporated from the original storehouse. In the 1950s, space for a second room was taken from the storehouse and added to the residence.

In 1939, work was done on the old ordnance storehouse. The window openings on the second story were widened and a new interior stairway was introduced in the south side. The older stair located in the southwest corner was removed. A new door and window were created on the first floor.

In 1977, plans were approved to replace the gable roof on the old arsenal storehouse with a mansard roof that added a fully usable third floor for office space.

B. Historical context:

When the New York Arsenal was established as a separate entity under the Ordnance Department in 1833, the first two buildings to be constructed were two stone and brick storehouses, one with an axis that ran north-south, now incorporated in Building #135, and the other with an axis that ran east-west. These two buildings formed the outer edges of an equilateral triangle with the shoreline of the island forming the third side. This arrangement protected the gun yard in the center of this triangle.

By 1839, two officers quarters had been erected along the outer edges of the triangle. The larger of the two, the Commanding Officer's quarters, is now incorporated in Building #135. All four structures appear on a map of Governors Island of that date.

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Building #135 was the original core of the New York Arsenal from its founding and maintained its original uses until the arsenal was closed in 1920.

After the Army gained control of the structure, the residence remained basically intact and was renovated into two family housing units. The old ordnance storehouse was used for chemical warfare storage until it was converted into office space. In 1945, it was used as the Inspector General's office.

Although the second set of officer's quarters remained standing until the 20th century, the matching storehouse was removed in 1883 and replaced with a third officer's quarters in 1884. The site of the original second pair of storehouse and quarters is now occupied by Building #125.

Part II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The north end of the structure remains a residence and is one of the more elegant on the island. Especially notable are the well-preserved interiors. The southern end of the building has undergone severe remodeling with the addition of a mansard roof in 1977.
2. Condition of fabric: The exterior of the building is in good condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The building is a rectangular brick building with overall dimensions of 140' x 47'. It is composed of two parts. The office portion (the old ordnance storehouse) is three-stories, 79' (3 bays) x 39' with a basement and addition on the southern end of 27' x 12'. The residential portion of the structure is 61'-1" (7-bay facade) x 47' (3-bay side) with a rear wing addition, 25'-5" x 17'-6", plus a basement and an attic.
2. Foundations: The foundation of the south end of the structure is of uncoursed granite ashlar with raised mortar ridges. The north end of the structure has concrete over brick and stone foundation walls, 2' thick, and a granite water table.

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3. Walls: The first story of the south end is constructed of uncoursed ashlar, 1'-7" thick, with raised mortar joints. There is a stone string course between the first and second floors. The second story is brick, laid in Flemish bond, 1'-4" thick, with a string course between the second and third stories. The shed addition on the south end is a wood frame structure with horizontal wood siding and an all stretcher bond brick rear wall.

The north end of the structure is of common bond (1 header row to 5 stretcher rows) with a projecting header row above the second floor window line. The 1852 addition has a brownstone belt course between the first and second stories.

4. Structural systems, framing: The south end of the structure is masonry load bearing external walls with lolly columns supporting wood beams in the interior. The northern end of the building is masonry load bearing walls. The rear wing addition has brick pillars bearing the load.
5. Porches: Along the north and east sides of the residence end of the structure is a wrap-around one-story verandah. The floor of the porch is wood and is supported by iron posts and iron beams. There are decorative iron filigree columns, iron filigree panels, iron rails and posts. The porch roof is flat with a denticulated wooden cornice.

To the rear of the building is a flat-roofed, two-story enclosed wooden porch with horizontal wood siding supported on a brick foundation.

6. Chimneys: There are four brick chimneys located two on each side of the external walls of the original 1839 residence (the north end of Building #135). The chimneys have stone caps and are strengthened by metal tie rods.
7. Openings

- a. Doorways and doors: In the south end of the structure are three brick and stone arched doorways, 7'-5" wide, recessed in decorative arches 13'-11" wide along the east and west sides of the first story. These doorways are now paneled in and frame modern steel doors along the west side. One modern wood door with three glass lights has been cut through at the south end and a modern metal and glass door has been cut through at the first floor along the west end.

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In the residence end of the building are two doors along the east facade. The one in the 1852 addition is a paneled wood door with six glass lights. The main entrance to the residence is a Greek Revival doorway with wide granite pilasters supporting a simple molded entablature. The doorway is recessed with a four-light transom and three-pane sidelights flanked by slender applied wood pilasters. The door is a non-original wood paneled door with four glass lights in the upper half. In the west side of the structure are modern wood paneled doors with glass lights.

- b. Windows: In the south end of the structure at the first story level are six-over-six light double-hung sash windows, one with a concrete lintel and sill and two-wood framed. At the second and third story levels are paired one-over-one light aluminum storm windows.

In the north end of the structure are six-over-six light double-hung sash with either granite lintels and sills, brownstone lintels or sills or brown stuccoed concrete lintels and sills. A few later windows have no lintels. There are six-over-six light storm windows in the enclosed porch. In the basement and the wing are one-over-one light double-hung sash with either granite lintels and sills or concrete lintels and brick sills. In each gable end of the north section are semi-circular brick arched windows with brownstone sills.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The roof over the south end of the structure is an asphalt shingled mansard roof which was added in 1977. Over the north end is an asphalt shingled gable roof with a flat roof over the 1852 addition.
- b. Cornice, eaves: There is a wood cornice in the gable ends and a brownstone string course at the eaves line which continues round the entire building and joins with the cornice to make pedimented gable ends.

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C. Description of Interior: The interior of the storehouse portion of the structure was probably originally open space and has been renovated many times for office space. Only the interiors of the residence in the north end is discussed here.

1. Floor plans: The first floor is entered through the main entrance located off-center on the east side. This leads into a hall. To the north of the hall is a parlor which leads into a living room. From there, there is access to a rear sun porch. To the south of the living room and visible from the hall is the dining room. A bedroom is located in the one-story wing off the dining room at the rear of the structure. To the south of the dining room is the kitchen and laundry area and the rear exit to the house. To the south of the main entrance hall are two bedrooms and a bathroom. To the south of the hall between the bedroom and the dining room is the original stairway. This has been cut between the first and second floors, but it still leads to the basement.

The second floor is reached through an external wood staircase along the west of the structure or through the stairway located in the 1852 addition. From the west, one enters through the laundry area into a hall which runs north-south through the structure. Off this hall to the west is the kitchen, to the east are two bedrooms and a bathroom. To the north of the kitchen is the dining room and living room. To the east of the hall is another bedroom and bathroom. In the same area as the stairs leading to the basement on the first floor are located a set of stairs leading to the attic. Added to this residence are two rooms that were originally part of the old storehouse space.

2. Stairways: There are two interior stairways. One is located in the 1852 addition. The other is located in the main building to the south of the main hall on the first floor, perpendicular to the outer wall of the original 1839 structure. This is the original location of the stairway as shown in the 1876 plans.
3. Flooring: Patterned parquet floors are located in the entrance hall, the living room and the dining room.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The wall finishing is plaster. Some walls are wallpapered. There are wood baseboards and wood molding at the ceiling. The ceilings are plastered and some have round and oval plaster medallions in the centers that support modern lighting fixtures.

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5. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: The doors are mainly wood paneled doors. The doors in public areas have heavy wood moldings or applied wood pilasters that support simple wood architraves. The doors have wood sills. The doors to the porch on the first floor are double four light glass doors with two light transoms above. Other doors have simple wood frames. Some rooms have sliding double wood doors to separate them.
 - b. Windows: The windows are set in wood frames.
6. Decorative features and trim: The residence has several fireplaces. One has a marble mantelpiece, others have a wood or tile treatment.
 7. Hardware: Not noted.
 8. Mechanical equipment: Heating is accomplished through steam radiators. Air conditioning is by window units.
 9. Original furnishings: None.

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation: Along the east side of the structure is a triangular grassy area, originally the gun storage yard. Along the north and west sides of the residence portion are more grassy areas. To the south and west of the south end of the building is a parking area shared with Buildings #107 and #105.

A. Maps and architectural drawings:

The following documents are in the Cartographic and Architectural Branch of the National Archives, Record Group 77, Maps and Plans of the Office of the Chief of Engineers.

Map of Governor's Island, New York Harbor, Surveyed under the direction of Capt. J.G. Barnard, U.S. Engineers, 1839.
Fortification File, Drawer 37, sheet 15.

Copy of "Plan of Capt. Thornton" referred to in Adj. General's letter of Sept. 24, 1847 to Lt. Col. Talcott. Fortification File, Drawer 37, sheet 45.

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Map of a Survey of the shore of Governor's Island made under the direction of Major John G. Barnard, Corps of Engineers, 1857. Fortification File, Drawer 37, sheet 42.

Map of Governor's Island. Surveyed by Major John G. Barnard, Corps of Engineers, 1867. Fortification File, Drawer 37, sheet 55.

Map of Governor's Island. Surveyed by 1st Lieut. Eugene Graffin, Corps of Engineers and Frederick N. Owens Assistant Engineer, 1879. Fortification File, Drawer 37, sheet 63.

Map showing location of Water, Drain and Sewer Pipes on Governors Island. Office of the Post Quartermaster, Fort Columbus, 1879. Traced Nov. 1884. Miscellaneous Forts File, Series A, Fort Columbus.

The following plans were available from Facilities Engineering, New York Support Center, Governors Island, New York, New York:

Addition to rear of residence, 1935. (Copy in HABS No. NY-5715-6A Field Records).

Plans of alterations to storehouse, 1939

U.S. Army record drawings by the Post Engineer, 1956. (Copy in HABS No. NY-5715-6A Field Records).

B. Views

East side, ca. 1895-1904. National Archives, Still Pictures Branch, RC 165-FF-71-593.

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary and Unpublished Sources:

The following sources are located in the Navy and Old Army Branch of the National Archives, Record Group 156, Ordnance Department, Box 1003.

Inspection report of New York Depot June 30, 1842 by G. Thomford, Colonel of Ordnance.

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Inspection report of New York Depot July 13, 1849 by H.K. Craig, Lt. Colonel Ordnance and Inspector.

Reports of Inspections of Rome Arsenal, Watervliet and New York Arsenal by S. Churchill, Inspector General, 14 January 1854.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Benet, Stephen, V. A Collection of Annual Reports and Other Important Papers, Relating to the U.S. Ordnance Department, Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 4 vols, 1878-1891.

Fort Jay, Governors Island, New York. A Master Plan and Program for Future Development by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, 1945.

National Archives, Navy and Old Army Branch. "New York Arsenal, Governors' Island". Report on History of New York Arsenal prepared for Chief of Ordnance, U.S. Army, Washington, D.C., October 15, 1908.

Plans of Officers' Quarters at the Arsenals and Armory, Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1876. Plate 28, New York Arsenal.

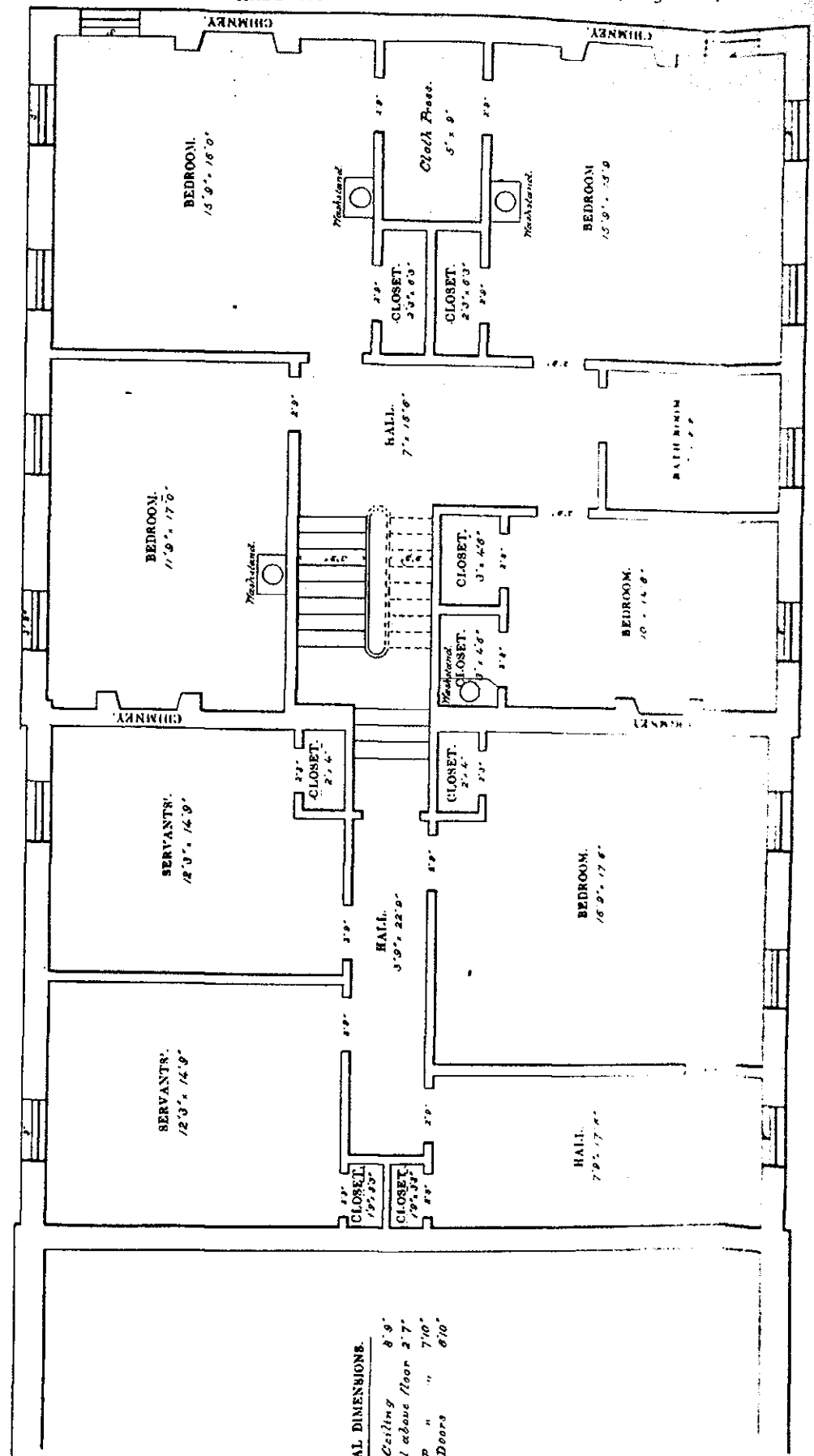
Plazcek, Adolf K. The Works of Asher Benjamin. IV. The Practical House Carpenter. Reprint edition of 1830 work. New York: Da Capo Press, 1972.

OFFICERS QUARTERS NEW YORK ARSENAL.

D. Supplemental Information
1.

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SECOND FLOOR.

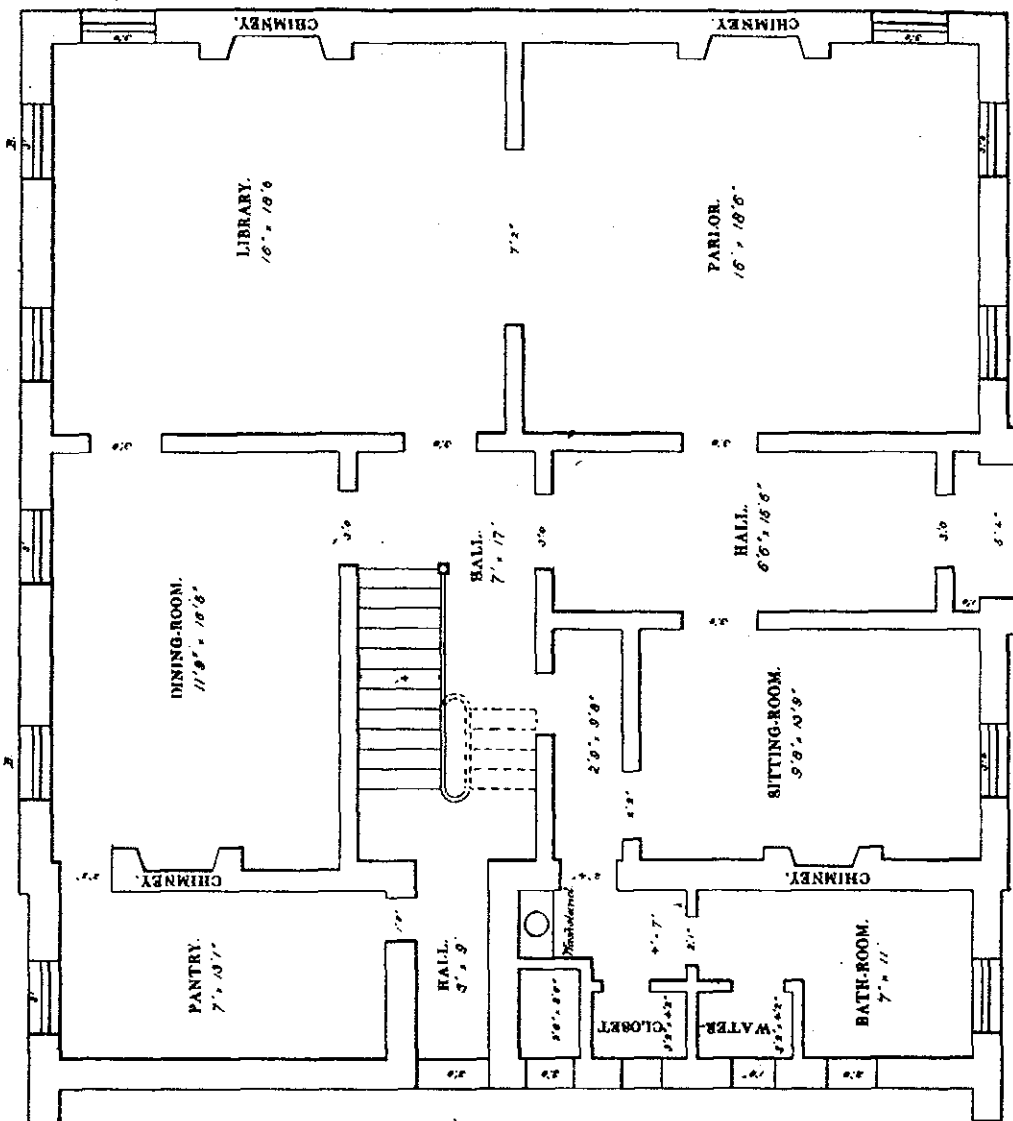


ADDITIONAL DIMENSIONS.

Height of Ceiling	8' 9"
Window Sill above floor	2' 7"
Cap "	7' 10"
Height of Doors	6' 10"

Second floor plan taken from Plans of Officers' Quarters at the Arsenal and Armory.
1876, Plate 28.

FIRST FLOOR.

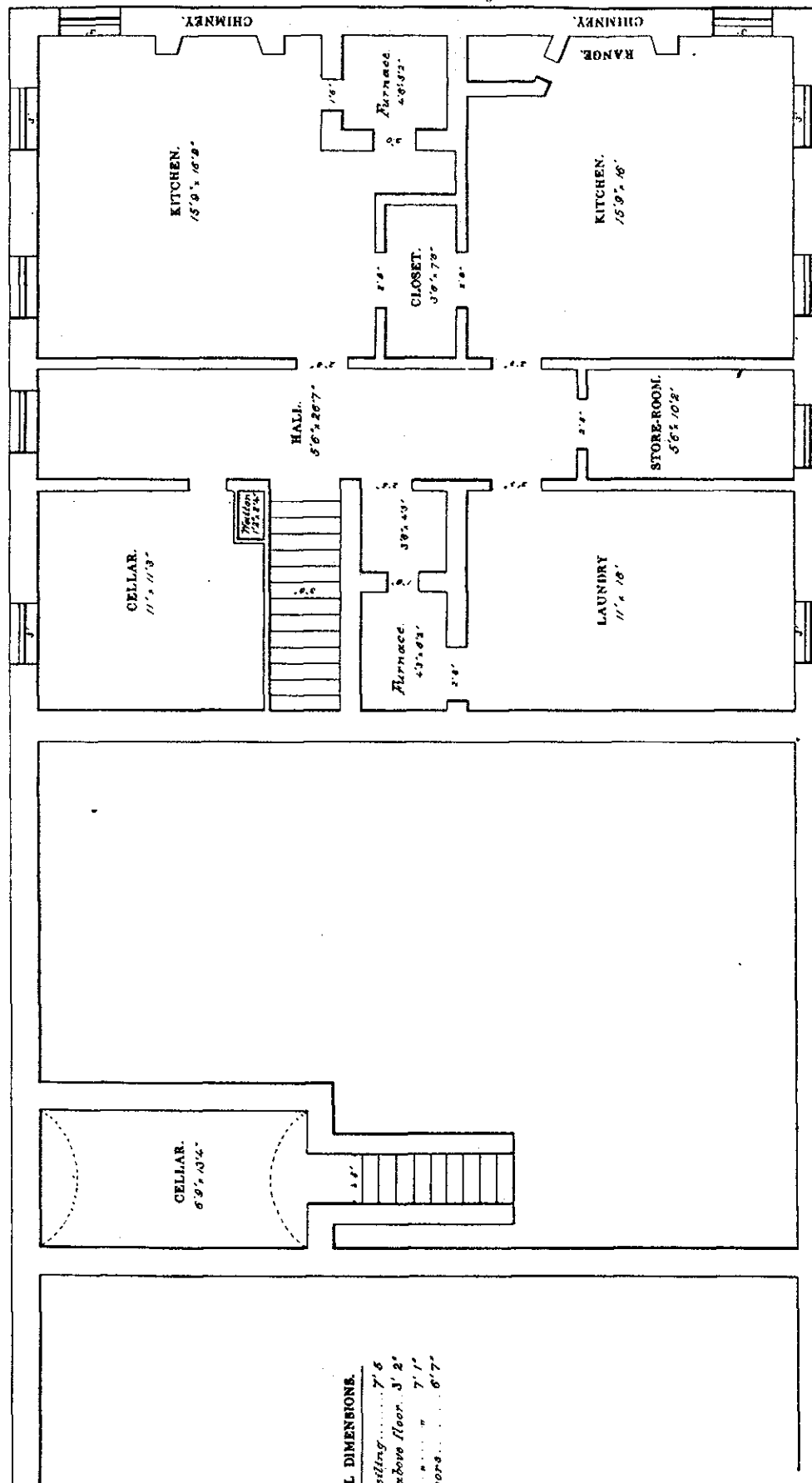


ADDITIONAL DIMENSIONS.

Height of Ceiling	10' 2"
Front Windows, marked A.	
Window Sill above floor	2' 10"
Window Cap	8' 8"
Back Windows, marked B.	
Window Sill above floor	0' 4"
Window Cap	8' 9"
For all other Windows.	
Window Sill above floor	2' 10"
Window Cap	8' 8"
Height of Doors	7' 4"

First floor plan taken from
Plans of Officers' Quarters at the
Arsenals and Armory, 1876, Plate 28.

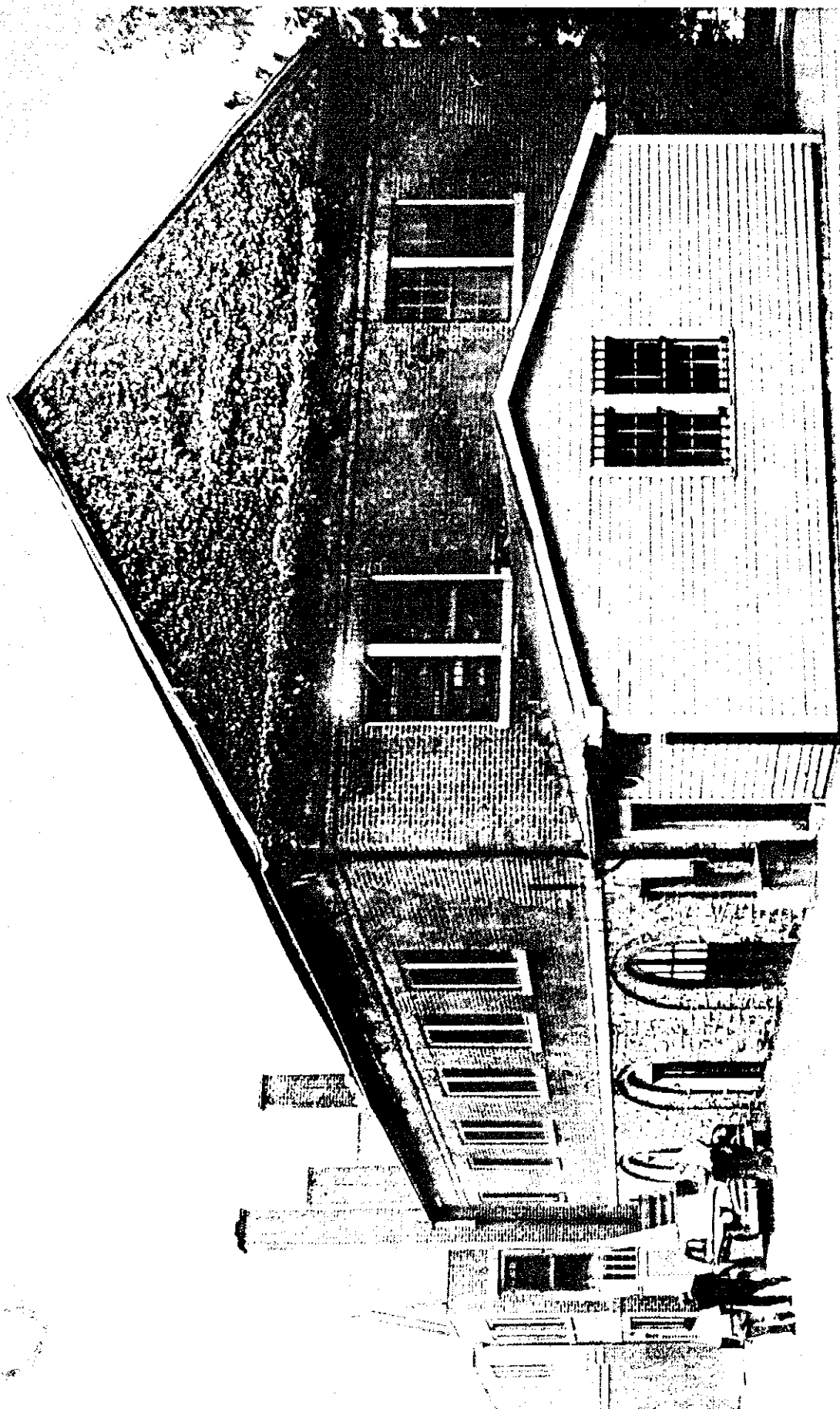
BASEMENT.



ADDITIONAL DIMENSIONS

Height of Ceiling..... 7' 6"
 Window Sill above floor. 3' 2"
 " " " " " 7' 1"
 Height of Doors..... 6' 7"

Basement plan taken from Plans of Officers' Quarters at the Arsenals and Armory, 1876, Plate 28.



Building #135, Postal Operations. Photograph shows building before the 1977 mansard roof was added. Date of photograph unknown.

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PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER) at the request of the United States Coast Guard, Third Coast Guard District, Governors Island, New York, who funded the project. It is an addition to work accomplished during the summers of 1982 and 1983. This entailed an historic structures inventory, a National Historic Landmark District nomination and documentation of five properties which was completed in 1984. A three-volume report and inventory cards containing the results of the historic structures inventory were transmitted to the Library of Congress as field records under HABS No. NY-5715. The National Historic Landmark District nomination was submitted and acted upon favorably by the National Park System Advisory Board in October of 1984. This project is to document a select list of structures including the New York Arsenal.

Sally Kress Tompkins, Deputy Chief of HABS/HAER, was project manager. Jet Lowe, HAER staff photographer, completed the large format photography. Jay Silberman, Environmental Specialist, District Planning Office, Third Coast Guard District, Governors Island, served as manager and coordinator of the project for the U.S. Coast Guard. Katherine Grandine was project historian.